

Animals and Their Signs

Pre-visit Activity

Suggested Grade Level: K-2

Skills Practiced

- Using different media to create art projects
- Improving fine motor coordination
- Manipulating small objects

N.C. Science Curriculum Competency Goals

Kindergarten

1.02 Similarities and differences in animals

Grade 1

1.02 Needs of animals

Objective

Students will be able to recognize different animal signs.

Background

Animals live all around us, in our parks, on our school grounds, and even in our backyards. We often fail to see these animals when we explore such areas. Why can't we find them? Perhaps we look for them at the wrong time of day. Maybe they see us first and hide. Fortunately, animals leave behind plenty of clues that tell us who they are, where they live, and what they do.

Signs that tell us that animals are in the area include tracks (footprints), scat (feces), food remains (e.g., pile of feathers, empty clam shells), food caches (e.g., nuts stored in tree hollows), and plant damage (e.g., leaf nibbled by an insect, claw marks on tree bark). Structures built or used by animals such as spider webs, anthills, bird nests, or tree cavities also indicate that animals live nearby.

Exhibit Hall Connections

The animals referred to in this activity can be found on display in the habitat dioramas located throughout the Mountains to the Sea exhibit hall.

Materials

- Animals and Their Signs activity sheet
- tape
- scissors
- crayons

Teacher Preparation

1. Before class starts, make enough copies of the activity sheet for every student in your class.
2. Gather the remaining materials.
3. *Answers to the activity sheet: crayfish—mud chimney; black bear—large mammal track; great blue heron—large bird track; beaver—dam; pileated woodpecker—tree cavity; red squirrel—chewed cone*

Activity

1. Hold a class discussion during which you and your students brainstorm what kinds of signs animals might leave behind. (See Background for ideas.)
2. Distribute the activity sheets, scissors, tape, and crayons to your students.
3. Instruct your students to cut out the animals on the left side of the activity sheet. Next, have your students determine which animal makes which sign. Tape each animal on top of its appropriate sign so that the animal pictures can be lifted up to reveal the signs underneath.
4. Students may color the animals and their signs.

Extensions

Using new copies of the activity sheet, make animal signs flash cards using 3"x5" index cards—cut out the pictures of the animals and the animal signs and then glue or tape them to index cards. Have students play games such as Concentration, Memory, or Go Fish using the flash cards.

References and Resources

Books for students

Animal Tracks, by Arthur Dorros

Crinkleroot's Book of Animal Tracking, by Jim Arnosky

How to Be a Nature Detective, by Millicent Selsam

I See Animals Hiding, by Jim Arnosky

Keep Looking!, by Millicent Selsam

Books for teachers

A Guide to Animal Tracking and Behavior, by Donald Stokes

North Carolina Wild: Wildlife Profile Series, published by the

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Tracking and the Art of Seeing: How to Read Animal Tracks, by Paul Rezendes